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S.F.

WARWICK BROOKES.
(Drawn by himself.)

WARWICK BROOKES'

PENCIL-PICTURES OF CHILD LIFE

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL REMINISCENCES BY

T LETHERBROW

TWENTY-FOUR ENGRAVINGS FROM PICTURES BY WARWICK BROOKES

BOSTON
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WARWICK BROOKES'

PENCIL-PICTURES OF CHILD LIFE

WARWICK BROOKES, the English artist who drew the beautiful pencil-pictures of home, peace and childhood that are now famous, was born in the stormy closing years of the reign of George the Third. His own childhood fell in the very darkest of this century — in the troubled days of Napoleon's wars, when bad hard laws were made in England, and bread was dear, and work uncertain. War always means wasted money, high taxes, stoppage of work and trade, closed mills and factories, thousands of men and women thrown out of employment, high prices of food, and therefore much suffering among

laboring people. Warwick Brookes' parents were of these poor people, Lancashire factory-folk, and the little boy himself was born in Salford, a suburb of the great cotton-mill town of Manchester, in 1808. The picture, "The Annual Horse Fair," gives you an idea of his birthplace; in the passage under the hanging lamp in the distance stands the house where he was born.

Salford is a historic borough, an ancient Danish settlement, a royal stronghold of Edward the Confessor, apportioned to and quaintly described in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book. King Canute once came riding through it, and one of his knights, Ranulphus de Trayford, settled there, on the banks of one of the three rivers that wind about the town, and in the family hall on its banks, a mile or two below, his descendants live still. Some of the Salford mills have stood here since 1134; and just below the town run the great Roman roads

BABY AND SISTER.

of Julius Agricola, built back in the days of Queen Boadicea. There are celebrated schools at Salford also, and some famous men have been educated in them.

SON OF WARWICK BROOKES.
(*Said to look very much like his father at the same age.*)

But, born in the very lap of History, and among the venerable temples of learning, little Warwick Brookes was not bred a scholar; he was never, as pupil, inside Salford's celebrated grammar school. The school to which he was sent was evidently inferior, since he was taught to write not with pens, ink, and paper, but with his finger, in a box of smoothed sand. It was a part of the duty of the little scholar to carry a black lead

pencil to the master in order that the attendance book might be marked. This operation the child viewed with intense interest; it was performed by the aid of an instrument with which he then became acquainted for the first time but which, in future years, in his hand was to picture those beautiful babies that Dante Gabriel Rossetti pronounced "triumphs, every one of them."

At this school the little six-year-old Warwick — there is a tradition that he was descended from a daughter of the great Warwick, the King-Maker — staid only three years. By the time he was nine years old the general distress and poverty had further involved his parents, and he was taken from school to help earn the daily bread, for his father shared in the general dissipation into which discouragement and lack of work often plunge the poor. The little lad went into a print-works to act as "tear-boy" to his Uncle Thomas who was a block printer on

THE ANNUAL HORSE FAIR AT SALFORD, THE BIRTHPLACE OF WARWICK BROOKES.

calicoes. His duty was to dip a brush in color and to keep supplied the color-cloth on which the printer daubed his block before he applied it to the fabric.

A "PENCIL-PICTURE."

His brave mother (we should never have known of her but from the lips of her children), a Yorkshire woman and a schoolmaster's daughter, had hard work to keep want from the door; but her Yorkshire thrift brought them through, on how small means will never be told, and with wholesome oatmeal porridge, and buttermilk and the home-made loaf, she kept the table going.

Her children were all gifted. If nothing else, she taught them self-respect and contentment.

"Once, in a quiet hour, the artist spoke to me," says a friend, "of the darkest shadow that rested on their home: how on Saturday nights he could not sleep in his little bed, but lay awake full of fear far on towards midnight. Hard indeed was the portion of the patient wife; but her griefs made her son register a vow that no woman or child should ever suffer for his sins. And to the last he treated his loved ones with more than womanly gentleness."

You bright American children, with your magazines, scientific toys, and countless books, cannot realize the lot of this little "tear-boy" in the small cottage in a smoky English town. His books were only the Bible and Robinson Crusoe; pictures he had none, nor any art-possessions except a few silhouettes of pigs and horses, which a neighbor's lad used to cut out in paper, and fling in at the little window of his bedroom. They were clever in their way, and gave him great delight.

IN DARK DAYS.

HOME-MADE PLAYTHINGS.

Once he told me that before he possessed a pencil, he used to go about the streets noticing the lines of buildings, cart-wheels, barrows, and any common object, thinking how they ought to be put on paper, and that this habit never left him, and later he applied it to the human figure.

It was a golden day to him when for the first time he saw in a book-shop window in the old market-stead of Manchester an engraving from Sir Joshua Reynolds. He gloated on it, he worshiped it, he dreamed of it. It was more to him than twenty South Kensington hand-books, and selected examples from the great masters. Indeed, he used to shake his head mournfully over modern drawing systems. "Look at this," he said, holding up a copy of outline in the flat, of a vase. "This is what they give them to do. The lad has been weeks over it, and the master has gone over every line too. It would task my powers to do a thing like this, and it is no mortal use when done."

Nobody rejoiced more than he did over the development of painting, the national school system, and all the new aids for youth. But before his death he used to wonder how it was that with such numerous baits and incitements and medals and honors lads did not do better;

AMUSING THE BABY.

above all that they did not really care for their studies.

He himself had great aptitude for everything which required nicety of touch and manipulative skill; as a boy he made all kinds of playthings, theatrical characters, stage appliances, etc., better than any other boy. As a man, he was neat, precise, and delicate in whatever mechanical work he undertook, and in the various processes connected with drawing and painting in all their branches. No phase of artistic labor came amiss or presented any difficulty. He could imagine, and draw a design on copper, etch, bite, and print it, at a first trial, with complete success. There is a wood-cut in existence which exemplifies this. Taking a block of wood he drew on it a pretty design of a nude Venus and Cupid; then with some simple tool he cut the design and printed it; looking at the skill with which this was done, and the knowledge it displayed of the properties of lines, it would be

difficult for any one to believe that this was a first attempt in the art of wood-engraving.

When at work, he often amused himself by making a patchwork drawing; that is, he would take up the nearest bit of paper when some figure-combination suddenly caught his eye, and sketch it down rapidly; such lines made in the heat of conception cannot well be copied; he, therefore, expanding the idea, added another piece of paper and yet another (sometimes several more), and then united them so deftly that the process was only discovered on close inspection.

But how was it that he, this poor little "tear-boy," with so few books and such little schooling, wrote and spoke fine English, read with understanding, and perfected at least one talent God had given him, while the new generation seemed to carry so little from their numerous classes?

In one thing Warwick Brookes was happier

SO BUSY!

than the small toilers of our vast cities at the present day. Manchester was a comparatively little town then; you could see blue sky overhead from the work-shop windows, and fifteen minutes brought you to green fields beside the river. Thither little Warwick, a small-limbed, big-browed child, with earnest eyes, would often wander with bigger boys on Sunday afternoon, watching the fish in the brook and pulling wild-flowers. Coming home on these quiet Sunday afternoons he would lay his bunch of lilac, May-flowers or buttercups on the clean-scoured kitchen dresser in an old brown pitcher, and hover near to gaze on them with delight.

The poor mother, her week's work satisfactorily behind her, her small dwelling made as bright as her thrifty hands could do it, had an hour or two for retrospective Sunday thoughts. The flowers awoke recollections of long-past childhood, when she too pulled flowers in the meadows under the shadow of the old weather-

beaten tower of Askrigg Church by the silver Yare.

At such moments she dwelt with the passionate love of a daleswoman on the beauties of her native Wensleydale, and the child drunk it in eagerly. Beyond the dark and narrow streets of Manchester with their noise of wooden-shod feet and whirring looms, oh! so far away, lay Wensleydale, where she was born, and where their folk had dwelt for hundreds of years.

There the silver Yare wanders at its will, unvexed by dirty dye-works and noisy mills, only turning here and there a mossy mill-wheel; and the young lambs play on the banks, and the birds sing by thousands in the hazel-copses, where nuts hang thick in October. Surely there never was anything so sweet as Wensleydale; one walk across those fields would cure her headaches which were so bad in the heavy air of the town.

But the moors with their purple heather, and

RED RIDING-HOOD.

the crags with their wild thyme were loveliest. Or perhaps after all the valley was loveliest, especially in the month of May when orchids and primrose and cowslip stand thick on all the waysides, countless as the stars in heaven, and so common that nobody cares to pull them, save the wee bairnies, like herself, who used to make bunches and set them around in the sand and call it a "dilly-hall."

You can fancy the long talks mother and child had in their quiet moments, and how the boy dreamed of the wonders of that mother-land. Mrs. Brookes could not write poetry, but she thought and felt all that Heine puts in those pretty verses of which I have made a free translation for you: —

"My child, we twain were children,
Two children small and gay;
We played in the barn in winter
And hid ourselves in the hay.

We crowed and clucked in the corner
When passers-by came near;
We thought they would take our voices
For the call of Chanticleer.

Sometimes we sat and prated
Just like our old grandame,
How things had been in our young days
And never would be the same;

How faith and love and duty
Were vanished from earth,
And money was scarce and bread was dear,
And winter would bring dearth.

Sometimes our neighbor's pussy
Looked in upon our games;
Then we made her bows and curtesies,
And gave her courtly names.

We asked if her cough was better,
And gossiped of this and that;
We've done as much and more since then,
To many a rich old cat!

The children's games are over,
The busy world rolls on,
With its songs and its tears and its weary pelf,
But where are those children gone?"

HOME MODELS.

At this period the lad drew by instinct whatever came before him — his own hand, his mother's Delft plates and platters, the public-house sign, anything, everything. Often at the calico-works did he look with longing upon an inner sanctuary where the designs were made, and which the workmen irreverently termed "the conjuring shop."

A SLATE PICTURE.

In one place was noise, rough manners, distasteful vulgarity; in the other, order, repose, an atmosphere of art, and the windows looked upon green fields and the high moorland stream. But the idea of entering that sanctuary was too visionary to be entertained.

Some drawings of his, however, fell into the hands of the master; he was astonished, and exclaimed "Have I a tear-boy who can do this?" The little draughtsman was sent for, set to work (a thing beyond his hopes!) and, ere long, apprenticed. The shepherd-boy of Vespignano found a friend in Cimabué, and the tear-boy a friend in the calico-printer!

He soon justified the step by making designs which became so popular that they were engraved several times, and, as time went on, he was advanced into work where artistic oversight was required.

It was a proud day for young Brookes, when, as the head of the family (his father being dead) he was able to take home the wages of a journeyman, with his indentures which he had honorably served. Change was distasteful to him, and he remained with his first employer for fifteen years, during which he steadily advanced, by his own unaided efforts, in artistic skill.

"BEAUTIFUL BABIES."

At last a great awakening came in the visit of B. R. Haydon to Manchester for the purpose of lecturing on art. Full of learning and enthusiasm, his eloquence made a deep impression. He was horrified at the state of art, and of the arts of design, and wrote and spoke with energy in favor of the establishment of Schools of Design. As a result the first school was established in 1838, and Warwick Brookes then thirty years old was for the first time not only able to see, but to study, in the works of Phidias, the finest emanations of the genius of art which the world has ever seen, or will see.

In this school, under an able master, after his day's labor at designing patterns, he studied steadily during five years, when the resignation of the master, and a change in the system, caused Mr. Brookes and a body of the best students to leave and set up an artistic republic of their own. This band of earnest, studious, gifted men worked together for more than

twenty years, and during these years Mr. Brookes's delightful talent and unique style were developed. His continual endeavor was after Youth, Grace, and Beauty. The tragic and terrible were alien to the tranquil current of his thoughts. He was attracted by the elegant and the delicate. Omitting what was vulgar and prosaic he strove rather to give the soul and the spirit.

All this while he remained at the pattern-designer's bench. He resisted appeals to quit his business for the profession of art, and even declined tempting offers to go abroad in the pursuit of his ordinary calling. His mother he would not quit, her comfort he would not imperil. On this account, though a great lover of children, and delighting in domestic life, he remained a bachelor until well past the mature age of forty.

But, one summer's day, while sketching in the sylvan glades of a forest in Cheshire, a

A-MAYING.

woodland nymph appeared who effected a considerable change in his ideas and life-plans. Her father's cottage to which he found his way afforded a pleasant subject for his pencil, with its flower garden and climbing plants. So too did the house, the calves, the sheep and lambs of the little farm. It was wonderful how many objects he found to sketch, inside and out, and how many visits he found it indispensable to make. He learned, in short, that one of these objects he could in no wise dispense with, and therefore, in 1852 he married and took the wood nymph home.

In 1853, Mr. Brookes lost his mother. Side by side they had journeyed for fifty years, and their first parting (of any moment) was their last.

Now if ever was the time for him to follow his bent and cleave to art! But the ambition for fame was not in his gentle nature. Besides, a family was growing up around him and pre-

cluded the idea. So, like William Blake, he went on working during the day at an alien business, and in the evening gave himself to the free enjoyment of his powers. The wonder is that one did not spoil the other!

A LANE IN CHESHIRE.

His instruments were always of the simplest and least expensive; he had no elaborate paraphernalia, not even a lay-figure; was never troubled about a proper "light" or an "aspect;" had not a single costume of any kind — arms or armor; no draperies or studio "properties" of any sort.

But the human nature around him was as classic as in the days of Phidias. Grace of

LAMBS OF THE LITTLE FARM.

form, beauty of expression and harmony of combination existed precisely as in the Attic days; all that was wanted was the seeing eye. Themes, models and costumes were all within the four walls of his own dwelling, and the simple, homely, and pathetic prose of family life became, in his mind, a poem and then a picture. A few shillings furnished his stock in trade. For the instrument with which all his best things were done, namely, the black lead pencil, he never paid more than two or three cents; half-penny pencils he called them.

"CLASSIC AS IN THE DAYS OF PHIDIAS."

He never sat at his work, or used an easel, but stood and held his paper in his hand, and in

this way would make studies faultless in finish and lovely in texture.

But no young artist need suppose that such work as Warwick Brookes's can be got by mere copying of anything before him. "He once told me," says his friend, Dr. Crompton, "that he watched carefully for what was artistic." There is one of his sketches of one of his children in her nightdress. "Stop, mammy," he said to his wife, "keep her so till I have done."

"I never knew any man with a purer mind than Warwick Brookes," Dr. Crompton once said to me. And any one looking at his works must be sure that his love for his children and for child-life must have been of the warmest nature. The beam of love in his eye when his children were round him was charming; and the kindness of the man, and the tenderness of any little correction, were what one noticed at once.

This tenderness was shown in a hundred ways; among others by the patient manner in

THE SIMPLE PROSE OF FAMILY LIFE.

which he would sit, night after night, by the bed of a sick child, soothing its restless hours, and lulling it to sleep.

GRIEVING.

In his memory were no such precious and tender reminiscences; only the memory of hardships inseparable from poverty, and of dark midnight hours, spent in an agony of apprehension, waiting the coming of an unsteady step.

Most of his sketches were made from his own children. At one time one of his windows looked out upon a row of cottages, where the wives often sat at the doors with their children round them. He said that he often got ideas from them; some one asking where his studio was, he replied, taking him to this window: "My own home and those cottage steps."

His pencil sketches are in texture the most lovely things that can be imagined. A friend asking him whose pencils he used, he said "Half-penny joiners; I buy them from a man in the neighborhood." Ah, the art was in the man. Yet, it must not be supposed that he had not availed himself of every opportunity and help within his reach. He had many illustrated works, and his walls were covered with choice things — photographs from Raphael, fine engravings and a few water-color sketches by eminent men. His judgment of the works of other men was singularly sound. To go round an exhibition of pictures with him, and listen to his criticisms, was a high privilege. He was very small in person, and panted as he walked; but his eye would brighten and he would exclaim when he saw anything that he could commend. As to the teaching in schools of art, he had but a poor opinion of it, because it was so mechanical. No one could shade more beauti-

BED-TIME.

fully than he did, but he said that far too much attention was given to it — that it was mere mechanism — good as far as it went — but in following it too far artistic teaching was neglected.

As we have said, Mr Brookes was interested in the development of art in all its stages, especially in its primary steps in the public schools. In a private letter his son relates an amusing incident in this connection. He says: —

On one occasion my father was appointed the examiner of the pupils' drawings at one of the large public schools in the town of Manchester. The drawing-master brought the drawings to the house for him to go through. He soon picked out the one he considered the best and told the teacher that that one was entitled to the first prize. Then he found one which he said was worthy of the second prize. "But, Mr. Brookes," said the teacher, "the boy whom you say should have the first prize is a very naughty boy, and the other boy is a very good boy. Had we not better award the first prize to the good boy, and give the other one the second prize?" "No — no," said

my father, "I can never give my consent to any such arrangement. However bad the boy may be in other things, his drawings are certainly the best, and if my name is to be mentioned as the examiner of the drawings I shall insist upon the first prize being awarded to the boy whose drawing I consider best, whatever his faults may be."

"One day," says his physician, the good Dr. Crompton, "I saw him ill in bed. There were two windows opposite the bed between which was a wash-stand and over it a piece of muslin on a string to keep the wall-paper from being spotted. He said to me 'I sent for my boy' (I forget the name) 'and said to him, "Dost thou see anything in that muslin?" and the boy said "no." I told him that he would never be an artist, then, for I could see figures dancing.' On his recovery, he made a drawing of these dancing figures which he gave to my wife — a thing of great beauty and worthy of Stothard."

This kindly critic was the most genial and

"MODELS WERE WITHIN THE FOUR WALLS OF HIS OWN DWELLING."

"easily entreated" of companions. He had considerable musical ability. As a boy he was a chorister in a place of worship in Salford. At maturity his voice was bass, but the only musical accomplishment he cultivated was that of whistling; he remembered tunes with facility, and would sometimes gratify his friends by whistling long and intricate passages from operas without the omission of a semiquaver; the tone being sweet and delicate and having a remoteness about it which added to the charm.

NEIGHBOR CHILDREN.

It has been said that those artists who have

delighted in the charm of cats have delighted equally in the charm of women, and a love of the good and beautiful. This was certainly true of Mr. Brookes; like Mohammed and the Egyptians he venerated the majesty and wisdom of the harmless, necessary cat, and would readily have believed what was affirmed of the famous French actor of Hamlet, Rouvéire, that his system of gesture was based on the study of the cat, and that the contemplation of that animal would do an actor as much good as a whole course at the Conservatoire.

Anyhow Mr. Brookes was as great a lover of cats as Godfrey Mind, the Swiss Katzen-Raphael, who lived a hundred years ago, but he drew them more delightfully. He was in perfect sympathy with the elegance, grace, insight and composure of the cat, and reproduced these qualities perfectly, in oil, and in black and white. His cats had not the fantastic *diablerie* of Japanese and heathen cats generally, nor the

CONVALESCENT.

tigerish look with which some French painters invest them, nor the rough vigor of Harrison Weir's; he drew them better than the Germans,

THE CIRCUS.

Oscar Pletsch and Richter, making them eminently feline and beautiful.

It is curious in the case of such a lover of animals that the dog so seldom appears in his drawings, and that he did not possess one.

In his annual visit to London, a day at the zoölogical gardens formed an important part.

On one occasion there was a great stir owing to the disappearance of a serpent. On examination it was found that a huge boa had swallowed all but a small portion which still projected from the creature's fangs; this was seized and the luckless serpent drawn from its living tomb by main force; seeing this, and a lovely kitten entering at the same moment, showing the tip of its rosy tongue, the artist feared it was about to become the prey of one of the reptiles, so, seizing it he exclaimed: "Bless thee! thou shalt not be eaten. Thou art worth everything in this place!" But loitering in the gardens too long the gates were closed and he was compelled to scale them. The comical appearance of the artist on the top of the gates with a half-amused, half-terrified expression of face, a large hat and immaterial legs (which were of the Charles Lamb type) was greatly enjoyed by his companions.

The current of his life which had flowed on

"GIVE PUSSY A PIECE!"

so peacefully for more than fifty years, was in 1865 rudely interrupted by the beginning of his long illness of seventeen years!

It was during the dark early days of this time, when the future of himself and his family bade fair to grow more and more clouded and uncertain, that he made the great and powerful friendships which lit with sunshine the close of his life. By the advice of Dr. Crompton, Mr. Nesmith, and Mr. Shields, his lovely pencil-pictures were photographed and published in a series; and through these he was soon made known to the best of the hereditary and intellectual leaders of London society who liberally bought his drawings, and portfolios of photographs, and invited him to their town and country houses.

Sir Francis Grant, the President of the Royal Academy, Millais, Rossetti, Watts, and other eminent artists marveled at the fine quality of his art. For a series of years he enjoyed the

most delicate hospitality of Lord Northbourne, which no doubt greatly prolonged his life, and often the "tear-boy" of the dark days of George the Third found himself in the midst of the foremost statesmen of the Victorian era. Among the many services rendered by this kind nobleman to the artist, the most memorable was the bringing him to the notice of the Prime Minister of that time, the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone. The cares of a vast empire and the passing of a series of great measures through the House of Commons pressed, but the kind man made leisure to examine, appreciate, and enjoy the work of the artist, to correspond with him and, at his castle in Wales, in the midst of his family, to treat him with the greatest kindness and attention.

A greater contrast can hardly be imagined than that presented by these two figures, in earnest talk at the Study at Hawarden. The statesman was a year younger than the artist;

THE PET LAMB.

yet the one was a child in comparison with the other, who was versed in the law of all the ages, and in the multifarious branches of statecraft. The difference was as great as that between the drawing of "The Pet Lamb" lying on the table, and its neighbor, the "Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church." The student of Homer bade the student of Phidias to be of good cheer, assuring him that he should never want for anything.

Mr. Gladstone's active interest did not end here; the artist's work was shown to Her Majesty the Queen, who gladly purchased several specimens (as did her daughter the Princess Louise) and wrote to say how much she was charmed with them, and she also cordially assented to a proposal which Mr. Gladstone made, that Mr. Brookes should be granted a pension of one hundred pounds per annum, and that it should be dated for the previous year.

For eleven years longer, hopeful and happy to

the last, Mr. Brookes worked on at home, and making short excursions to beautiful country lanes and green spots, producing a series of exquisite studies. Then came the end.

On the evening of his death it is said that an Italian woman came and played on an organ in front of the house. The tune was unnoted, it might have been Burns's "Land o' the Leal"; fearing the noise might disturb him, they were about to send her away but he at once reproved them, saying "Don't send her away; she is the countrywoman of Raphael!"

On hearing of his death the Prime Minister (though busied in great affairs respecting Ireland and Egypt) wrote by return of post the following letter to a son of the artist, and, on receiving a reply, forwarded a donation from the Queen's Bounty of a hundred pounds:—

10. Downing Street.
Whitehall.

Aug 14. 82

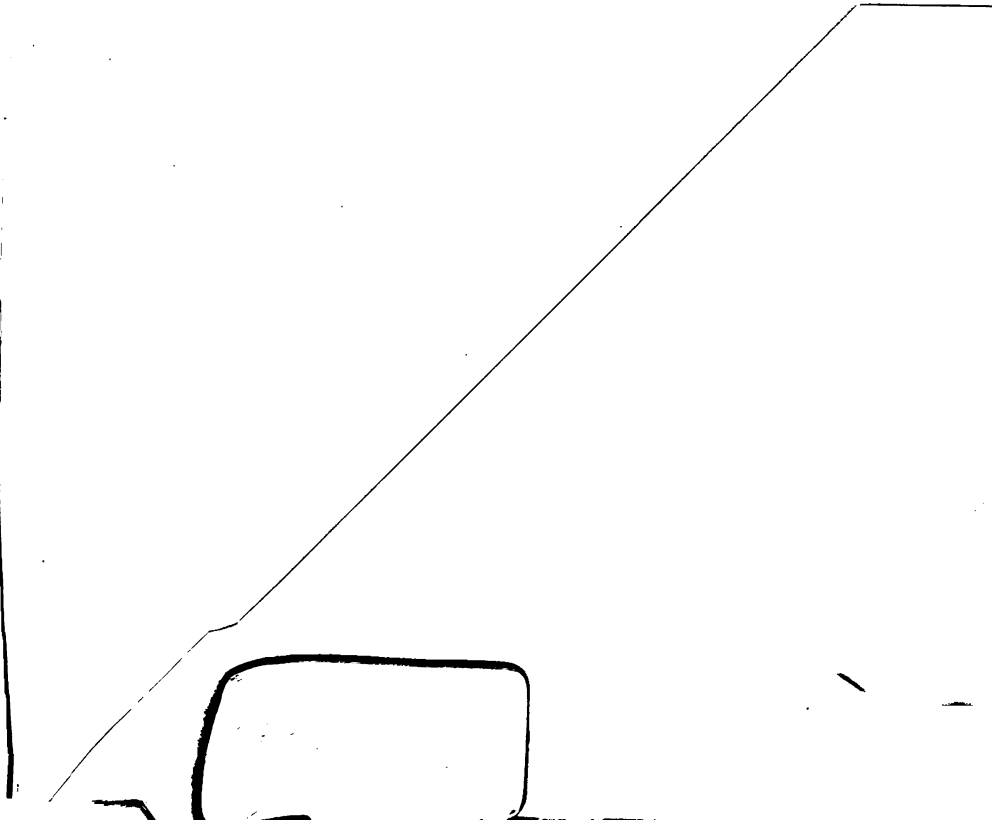
My dear Sir

My wife and I are much moved by your letter. We look back upon your Father's life; I may say, with an affectionate interest and regard. It was indeed noble, pure, and beautiful; and it seemed as if an Unseen discipline, without intrusive

conflict, sufficed to raise him to the point at which he might escape from the flesh and from the pressure of the world to enjoy at once the vision of God.

Have the goodness to inform me as to the health, & also as to the circumstances of your mother (I believe she survives him) and family. I remain

Your very faithful & obedient

Warwick Brooks W. E. Gladstone

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